

Soviets Deny Charges of Role in Papal Attack

ROME (UPI)—The Soviet Union and Bulgaria on Saturday denied the charge by Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca that his attempt to assassinate Pope John Paul II was organized by the KGB and the Bulgarian intelligence service.

Meanwhile, Italian Justice Minister Clelio Darida ordered an investigation to determine how reporters got access to Agca to record his charges. Agca's televised remarks to reporters from a police van outside the Rome police headquarters Friday raised delicate problems in East-West and church-state relations, and the Vatican and the Italian Foreign Ministry withheld comment.

It was the first time that Agca—who shot and seriously wounded the Pope in St. Peter's Square on May 19, 1981—made public a charge he reportedly has often voiced in interrogations. What makes the charge of KGB involvement especially sensitive is that Yuri V. Andropov, now Soviet leader, was head of the Soviet security police at the time of the attack.

In Moscow, the official Soviet news agency Tass said, "There are absolutely no facts to bear out, directly or indirectly, the socialist countries' complicity in the heinous crime."

It said Agca's charge was meant to divert attention from "the true organizers and inspirers of acts of terrorism, who are closely linked with neo-Fascist circles and the American CIA."

Agca's claim was also denied in Bulgaria.

"There is nothing new in the slanders publicly repeated on Friday by Ali Agca," an editor of the Bulgarian official news agency BTA said in Sofia, the Bulgarian capital. He called the charge "absurd and groundless."